JOINING FORCES
THE SECRET SAUCE OF INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

By Tamara Goetz, Executive Director,
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There is a Latin saying, "You can never find a lost opportunity," and from all appearances it would seem that Utah industry partners are not taking any chances on losing the opportunity to support STEM education.

It is no secret that Utah companies need computing talent and that computing careers are amazing opportunities for Utah students. Computing knowledge and skills cut across nearly every sector of business and industry. How will we prepare students for these career opportunities? Will they have the computing know how for careers or jobs that exist, or are yet to emerge?

There are a number of industry and education partners that have recognized that this challenge will be much less daunting if they work together to inform and support students. How are they doing it? What obstacles did they have to overcome to successfully collaborate? What is their secret sauce that makes these partnerships mutually beneficial to both industry and educators?

The good news is that this entire magazine could be filled with stories of Utah companies doing great things with Utah teachers and students. The examples showcased below represent a fraction of the activity buzzing around in the Beehive State.

LEVERAGING PERSONAL EXPERIENCE TO INSPIRE – INSIDESALES

Dave Elkington, CEO of InsideSales, in on a mission to inspire children to love coding and STEM, especially girls. According to Elkington, "The passion and interest about STEM education in elementary school came out of a very personal experience. … It was very concerning to me and my wife, because we have a daughter who is just two years younger than our son."

He continued to reflect, "I remember thinking: What is the social pressure that makes it not cool or not acceptable for a woman or a girl to get interested in computer science or in science in general, but it's OK for a boy to do that?"

Dave Elkington decided to do something about his concerns, translating them into action and inspiration with initiatives like Girls Code. This program creates the opportunity for young girls, ages 8 to 12, to learn about science and coding. They are taught the principles behind coding, logic, robotics and machine language. They use Scratch (a free programming language for kids) and Code.org to create a mobile game or web application. The Girls Code program exposes girls to the broad STEM category and helps fire up a passion, which Elkington believes "already exists for this field."

His inspiration to help young girls is paying off. The Girls Code initiative has been running for three years already, and it has been a wild success. That success led InsideSales to expand its efforts to Kids Code. The Kids Code program includes boys as well and continues to leverage Dave Elkington's personal experience and create programs in coding that he believes "are confidence building and can change the perspective of a young girl or a young boy for the rest of their lives."

THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERS - IVANTI

Ivanti has made a commitment to STEM education. Steve Daly, president and CEO of Ivanti, has put his passion for STEM education into action. Ivanti allows each employee to volunteer 16 hours per year of their time helping with STEM-based programs in the schools. So, what do you do with all of these amazing volunteers?

That is where Bruce Cutler steps in. Cutler worked with Ivanti for seven years as a software developer and, upon retirement in 2015, was asked to remain with the company as the STEM education outreach coordinator. Cutler brings his passion to the program by exploring existing opportunities for Ivanti volunteers and creating new ones.

Cutler and the Ivanti team have been working with Jordan School District to pilot a new coding class for girls. It is an eight-week course that connects Ivanti women engineers and computer scientists with young girls for an immersive coding experience.

The Ivanti team is now looking beyond the Wasatch front to help Utah students. They are taking the girls coding class on the road to Millard School District in an effort to spread the word that computing is for everyone. When asked what the secret sauce is to Ivanti's success with educational partnerships, Cutler has a simple answer: "Top-down leadership that promotes a corporate culture supporting STEM education and volunteerism."

BRINGING INNOVATION TO THE CLASSROOM - MICROSOFT
When people think of Microsoft, they usually think of Windows or Xbox. But little do they know the team at the Microsoft Store at City Creek in downtown Salt Lake City is hard at work bringing STEM to life in Utah classrooms. Wander into the Microsoft Store at City Creek, or any of their line locations on one of their STEM Saturdays, and you will find children having fun and learning STEM through a new learning experience featuring Hot Wheels® Speedometry ™ that uses everyday objects to teach youth
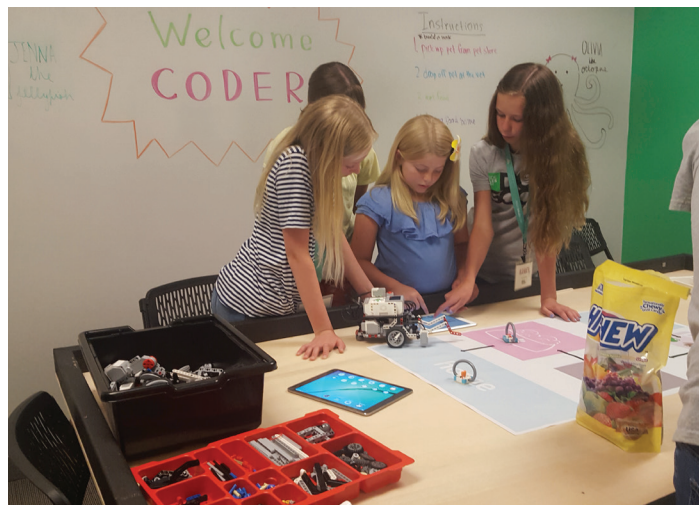
DAVE ELKINGTON DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIS CONCERNS, TRANSLATING THEM INTO ACTION AND INSPIRATION WITH INITIATIVES LIKE GIRLS CODE, WHICH CREATES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG GIRLS TO LEARN ABOUT SCIENCE AND CODING.

the fundamentals of energy, force and motion through hands-on learning.

If you can't fit a STEM Saturday into your schedule, the Microsoft Store offers free year-round events, workshops and programs, from Minecraft: Education Edition workshops to YouthSpark Camps that teach skills like creativity, collaboration and computational thinking. These workshops are in addition to the range of free programs the Microsoft Store hosts year-round that empower youth by providing direct access to technology and support digital skills for all ages.

"Here at the Microsoft Store at City Creek Center, we are committed to providing free resources and programs that bring coding into the classroom," said Corbett Carrel, product advisor, Microsoft Store at City Creek Center. "From inviting industry professionals to speak to classrooms and teaching computer science curriculums to educators, to hosting free in-store coding events and workshops that teach students about STEM careers, the Microsoft Store at City Creek Center is helping teachers and students use technology to make a real impact for a better tomorrow."

These company partners are just a few in Utah that are bringing the right ingredients to the table: working with education partners to bring a mix of inspiration and engagement, sharing passion through volunteering, and making learning fun on a Saturday. The opportunities that students have become endless when Utah companies and educators join forces.

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